

# Berlin protests against far-right politics...

Wednesday 24 October 2018, by [Ben Knight, Common Dreams, DPA](#) (Date first published: 13 October 2018).

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## Berlin protests against far-right politics draw thousands

October 13,2018 by Ben Knight

Over 200,000 people have taken to the streets of Berlin to face down the rise of far-right populism in Germany and Europe. The protesters were demanding more solidarity with marginalized groups.

Berlin produced an absurdly hot and sunny fall day on Saturday to welcome an estimated 240,000 people demonstrating against racism and calling for solidarity against the rise of far-right populism across Germany.

A 5-kilometer (3-mile) stretch of the capital city’s center, from Alexanderplatz through the Brandenburg Gate to the Victory Column, had to be closed down to accommodate the huge parade, which was united under the hashtag #unteilbar (“indivisible”).

The crowds were punctuated by 40 trucks mounted with loudspeakers, some delivering political messages, others pumping out music of all genres. They also included the traditional Berlin staple: the techno truck surrounded by semi-clothed dancers. The march was bookended by two concert events, the second of which was expected to stretch into the evening.

All kinds of organizations joined in, including trade unions, NGOs, political parties (both mainstream and fringe), gay rights groups, schools and theaters, all carrying a variety of banners, each with their own cause to promote (Ryanair workers were a conspicuous presence), but all united behind the slogan: “Solidarity not marginalization.”

### **A necessary reaction**

The number of people who made the original call to join Saturday’s demo would have made an impressive crowd themselves — some 10,000 organizations and individuals signed the declaration last week, which began with a note of alarm at the current trend in Germany’s political debate: “A dramatic political shift is taking place: Racism and discrimination are becoming socially acceptable,” it read. “What yesterday was considered unthinkable and unutterable has today become a reality. Humanity and human rights, religious freedom and the rule of law are being openly attacked. This is an attack on all of us.”

The declaration went on to attack the effects of global capitalism: “Millions suffer the impact of an underinvestment in basic care, healthcare, childcare and education.”

There was a widespread feeling in the crowd that such a mass statement was a vital correction in a country that has seen ordinary people joining far-right, even neo-Nazi protests, and several conservative politicians adopting anti-immigrant rhetoric.

“There are people here who want to show that they don’t support what is going on in Germany, including from established politicians, all this hate, this whole debate about immigration,” said Rola Saleh, a social worker who helps young refugees in the eastern city of Chemnitz, where far-right [violence made international headlines in late August](#).

### **Criminalizing refugees**

Saleh, who was in Berlin to give a speech for her group *Jugendliche ohne Grenzen* (“Youth without Borders”), told DW that refugees and people helping them were being “criminalized” in Germany.

“At the moment, a new police law is being planned in Saxony that would allow our advice center, where we give refugees legal advice, to be spied on,” she said. “These are things that are happening now: deportation custody, ‘anchor centers’, the marginalization of refugees.”

“We don’t have answers to a lot of the questions that the refugees ask us,” she said. “After the conflicts in Chemnitz, a lot of the refugees are afraid and uncertain about the situation. They feel like they’ve been abandoned; a lot of them are trying to leave Saxony, or they’re afraid they’ll be provoked into criminal acts by a situation. If you feel like you live in a state where the police are not ready or able to help you, you start thinking about finding ways to protect yourself.”

Julia Naji joined Saturday’s protest to represent Cycling Friends, a Berlin initiative that, among other things, runs cycling classes for refugees. “Today, people will meet up and show that we should fight against racism and homophobia as loudly and with as many people as possible,” she told DW.

She emphasized that most of the refugees she sees are happy living in Berlin. “Most of them feel quite welcome here and are astonished about the very small portion of the society being against them,” she said.

Naji, a German with a Syrian father, says the politics of far-right parties like the Alternative for Germany (AfD) are aimed at personally marginalizing her in her own country. “I’m a German, but I myself would feel excluded from any politics and any society that does not open itself to everyone,” she said.

### **Political support, and dissent**

Senior government figures lent their support to the demonstration, most notably Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, who tweeted: “It is a great signal that so many people are going on the streets and showing a clear position: We are indivisible. We won’t let ourselves be divided — certainly not by right-wing populists.”

While Maas’ Social Democratic Party (SPD), along with the Greens and the socialist Left party, all offered official support, Angela Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU) was absent on Saturday.

But there was some political dissent on the left too, especially from Left party leader Sahra Wagenknecht, who angered plenty of people by declaring that she would not be taking part in her party’s section of the demo.

During a podium discussion in Berlin on Tuesday night, Wagenknecht said she found the demo’s position problematic, since she claimed it called for “open borders for everyone.” This, she said,

marginalized people who were against open borders but also against racism. There is no mention of open borders in the demo's official declaration, though some people on Saturday were carrying banners that read, "Make Fortress Europe Fall."

Wagenknecht has held a somewhat isolated position in her party since beginning her own separate left-wing movement, named ["Aufstehen" — or "Stand up."](#)

## **"UnTrump the World": Hundreds of Thousands March in Berlin Against the Far Right**

October 13, 2018 by Common Dreams

Hundreds of thousands of people marched Saturday afternoon demonstrating against racism and calling for solidarity against the rise of the far-right across Germany and Europe.

On a hot and sunny fall day a 3-mile stretch of Berlin city's center, from Alexanderplatz through the Brandenburg Gate to the Victory Column, was closed to accommodate the huge parade, which was united under the hashtag [#unteilbar](#) ("indivisible").

A wide range of groups backed the "Indivisible" protest in the heart of the German capital under the slogan "For an Open and Free Society: Solidarity, not Exclusion!"

Here is the ["Call to Action"](#) that organizers issued last week:

### **For an Open and Free Society: Solidarity, not Exclusion!**

A dramatic political shift is taking place: racism and discrimination are becoming socially acceptable. What yesterday was considered unthinkable and unutterable, has today become a reality. Humanity and human rights, religious freedom, and the rule of law are being openly attacked. This is an attack on all of us.

We will not allow the welfare state to be played off against asylum and migration. We will stand in resistance when fundamental rights and freedoms are in danger of being further restricted.

We are expected to accept the deaths of those seeking refuge in Europe as 'normal'. Europe is in a grip of an atmosphere of nationalistic antagonism and exclusion. However, any criticism of these inhumane conditions is dismissed as unrealistic.

While the State tightens its 'so-called' security laws and extends surveillance in a show of strength, the social system is increasingly characterised by weakness: millions suffer the impact of an underinvestment in basic care, healthcare, childcare, and education. Since 'Agenda 2010', the redistribution of wealth from below to above has advanced at an alarming rate. The billions in profit generated through tax incentives stand in stark contrast to one of the biggest low-wage sectors in Europe and level of impoverished, disadvantaged people.

We are against this - we will resist!

We stand for an open and caring society, in which human rights are indivisible and in which diverse and self-determined ways of life, are undeniably respected.

We stand against all forms of hatred and discrimination. Together, we decidedly confront anti-Muslim racism, antisemitism, antiziganism, antifeminism and LGBTIQ-phobia.

There are already many of us.

Whether it's on Europe's external borders, or here within refugee organisations and in welcome initiatives; in queer-feminist and antiracist movements, migrant organisations, trade unions, associations, NGO's, religious communities, societies and neighbourhoods; whether it's through the fight against homelessness, displacement, or lack of care services, against surveillance and tightened security laws, or the stripping of rights from refugees — in many places, people are actively defending themselves and others against discrimination, criminalisation and exclusion.

Together, we will make this caring society visible. On 13 October, a clear signal will be sent from Berlin.

#unteilbar

For an Open and Free Society: Solidarity, not Exclusion!

Demonstration: 13 October 2018 - 13:00 Berlin

For a Europe of human rights and social justice!

For a solidarity-based society rather than exclusion and racism!

For the right to protection and asylum - against the isolation of Europe!

For a free and diverse society!

Solidarity knows no borders!

## **More than 240,000 participants: tens of thousands demonstrate in Berlin against racism**

October 13. 2018 by DPA

Berlin (dpa) - Powerful sign of tolerance and cosmopolitanism: According to organizers, about 240,000 people have come to one of the biggest demonstrations against racism and exclusion in recent years.

This number far exceeds the 40,000 participants registered. The police did not want to give their own information, but spoke only of "a few tens of thousands" people.

In the center of the capital was a colorful picture: both young and older participants had followed the call of the initiators, including many parents who brought their children. Under the motto "For an open and free society - Solidarity instead of exclusion", the alliance called "#Unteilbar" for the protest. It was directed against right-wing incitement, discrimination, the death of refugees in the Mediterranean and cuts in the social system. The police reportedly had around 900 officers on duty and reported no major incidents until the late afternoon.

The demonstration began at Alexanderplatz, from where the kilometer-long train slowly made its way over Leipziger Straße, Potsdamer Platz and the Brandenburg Gate and on to the Victory Column. Many people had banners, posters and balloons with them. Among other things, was read "No to incitement against Muslims" and "racism is not an alternative". A huge banner carried the inscription "Solidarity with the victims of right, racist and anti-Semitic violence".

“We should not stay home and watch, but also go out on the street,” said a 54-year-old participant from Brandenburg. A mother and her daughter from Berlin felt encouraged by the overwhelming participation against the shift to the right in society.

Numerous organizations, associations and parties supported the appeal, including celebrities such as the actor Benno Fürmann, the television presenter Jan Böhmermann and the band Die Ärzte. For the conclusion of the demonstration performances of prominent musicians like Herbert Grönemeyer were planned. Several organizations and parties were represented with their own cars, including the social alliance Attac, the Greens and the Left.

Foreign Minister Heiko Maas called it a great signal that so many take to the streets. “We do not let ourselves be split - of right-wing populists certainly not,” said Maas the newspapers of the spark media group. On the other hand, the Berlin CDU expressly did not support the demonstration. In support of her statement, Secretary-General Stefan Evers pointed out that the applicant was a lawyer for “Red Aid”, an organization supporting “left-wing extremist criminals”. In addition, the action is “supported by many other dubious organizations”.

Also in other German cities there were on Saturday actions against right, deportations and for solidarity with refugees. Under the motto “We are more”, around a thousand people also demonstrated against the AfD in Frankfurt. In Hesse, a new state parliament will be elected in two weeks. In Karlsruhe, around 2,000 people took to the streets “against nationalist and racist agitation”.

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## **Ben Knight, Common Dreams and International News**

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### **P.S.**

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<https://www.dw.com/en/berlin-protests-against-far-right-politics-draw-thousands/a-45873439>

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2018/10/13/untrump-world-hundreds-thousands-march-berlin-against-far-right>

<http://www.tellerreport.com/news/--more-than-240-000-participants--tens-of-thousands-demonstrate-in-berlin-against-racism-.rJRgyokjm.html>